

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION



**WINEENTHUSIAST**  
MAGAZINE

THE INSIDERS' GUIDE TO

# CALIFORNIA

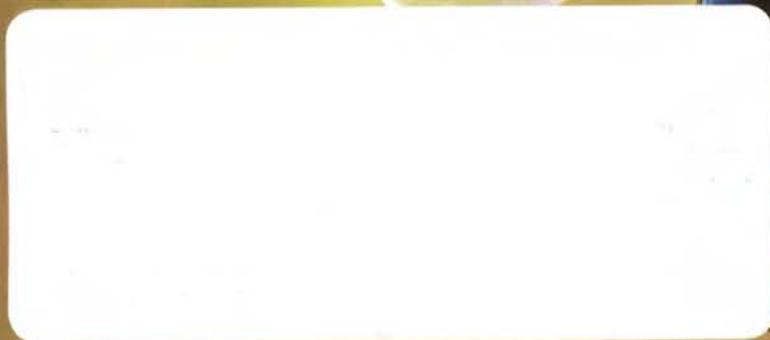
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# MASTERING MENDOCINO

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS VAST VINO PARADISE



## MENDOCINO/LAKE'S TOP VARIETIES

### ● *Pinot Noir*

Mendocino Coast and Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs are relatively light in body, color and texture, with invigorating spice, floral and red fruit notes.

### ● *Chardonnay*

Typically display notes of apple, melon and vanilla. Thanks to bright acidity, coastal Mendocino Chardonnay is often used in sparkling wines.

### ● *Zinfandel*

Aromas include ripe cherries and blueberries, cocoa powder, toasted oak and coffee; others are more classically briary, with tobacco, nutmeg and black pepper accents.

### ● *Sauvignon Blanc*

Lake County Sauvignon Blanc is among the most sought-after of the North Coast's offerings, crisply ripe in stone fruit and tropical flavors.





warmer Dry Creek Valley and Chalk Hill appellations.

For years, area vintners have talked of dividing the Russian River Valley into as many as six or seven smaller AVAs, based on fog and temperature patterns and, to a lesser degree, soils. But the process has become so politicized—as have many similar discussions in other California AVAs—that no change seems likely anytime soon.

Cool-climate Pinots are generally higher in acidity and more tannic, while those from the warmer zones are softer and more approachable. Neither style is better—they're just different. The winemaker's technique also impacts the wines. Oddly enough, both styles age well, presuming the wines are well made.

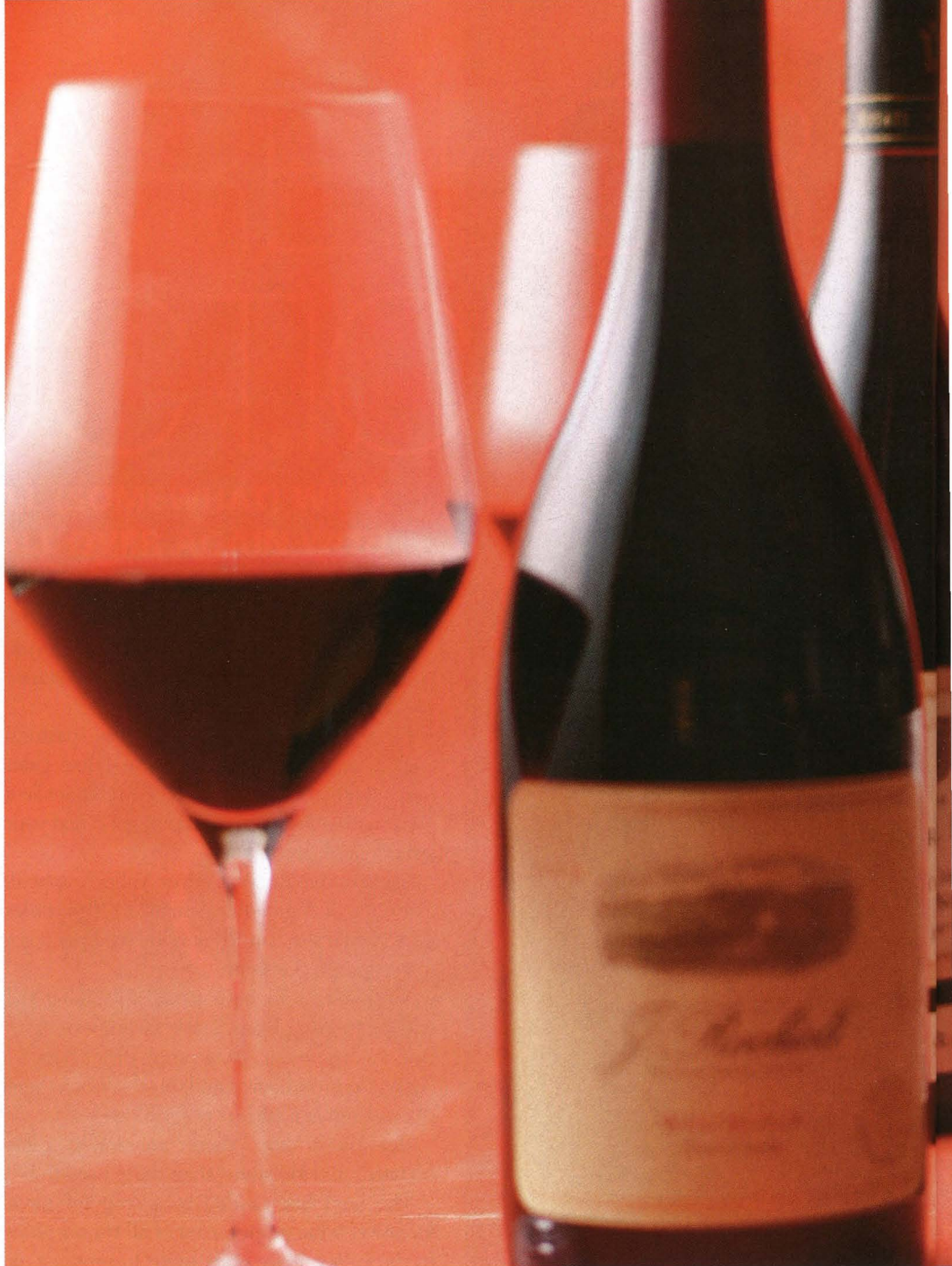
### PICK OF THE PINOTS

It's risky to name the best producers. Someone's always left off the list, while new brands come on the market seemingly every day. (It's relatively easy for a newcomer to buy grapes from top vineyards.)

However, here are some of the best cool-climate Pinots: **DeLoach**, Dutton-Goldfield, Joseph Swan, Lynmar, Marimar Estate and Merry Edwards. Rochioli's and Williams Selyem's finest vineyards are located in the slightly warmer north. Their wines show early opulence, yet can develop for up to 20 years.

The best wines are produced in small quantities and are expensive. Compared to top Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, however, Russian River Valley Pinot Noir remains a bargain.

Pinot Noir has become popular throughout California's coastal regions, from Santa Barbara up to Mendocino. But history will show that in the Russian River Valley, modern American Pinot Noir was born and came of age.



## ■ RIDING THE RUSSIAN RIVER

If there's a Middle Earth in California, it sprawls along the winding, two-lane Highway 116, in the northwestern part of the Russian River Valley.

After the road turns west above Forestville, you almost expect to see a hobbit scurrying amid the little wooden cabins up on stilts, or disappearing behind a Redwood tree. The forests plunge down from the coastal hills.

Here and there where the sunshine pokes through the canopy, you might glimpse color-splashed pools of wild iris, lupine and

buttercup. The quaint old bridges that span the silvery Russian River themselves are fairytales.

The houses are on stilts because the River floods in wet years. Little villages like Rio Nido, Monte Rio and Duncans Mills hardly hold more than clusters of homes, a gas station, a little food market or a bar.

The main town, Guerneville, has long been a summer getaway for fog-weary San Franciscans. It's best known for its beaches, counterculture lifestyle and for the LGBT community.

Beyond Guerneville, Highway 116 emerges into the broad, sunlit plain of the Russian River estuary. Here, the hills lower, the river widens, waterfowl flock the skies and the air smells of the sea.

Where the Highway meets the coast road, Route 1, the Pacific Ocean shimmers in all its glory (that is, if the fog isn't hiding it).

On the dramatic shoreline, giant waves crash onto massive seaweed-covered rocks and wide-swath soft sand beaches smattered with enormous strands of kelp. Sea lions bask and bark on the beach, while the occasional whale spouts just offshore.

